



## State of Idaho

# DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

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C. L. "BUTCH" OTTER  
Governor

DAVID R. TUTHILL, JR.  
Director

January 11, 2009

Honorable Wendy Jaquet  
House of Representatives  
Capitol Building  
Boise, Idaho 83720

RE: Water Management in the Big Wood and Little Wood River Basins

Dear Representative Jaquet:

Thank you for your interest in water management issues in the Big Wood and Little Wood River Basins, Water District Nos. 37 & 37M. I am in receipt of your inquiry dated December 4, 2008, and will clarify aspects of the letter and respond to the questions you have posed.

As a way to provide you with full information in this regard, I am including as attachments a letter from Mr. Jerry Nance, Vice-Chairman of Water Districts Nos. 37 & 37M dated October 29, 2008, and my response dated today. Mr. Nance's letter provides a detailed description of the meeting held October 10, 2008, and my response clarifies some of the issues and brings our view of water management in the Big Wood and Little Wood River Basins up to date. As you are aware, the past two months have included much discussion and analysis relative to funding, and my response to Mr. Nance identifies some of the impacts of recent funding reductions.

In your letter, you indicate that "it may be possible that USGS can provide the necessary input data for IDWR to model this basin so that groundwater, surface water and tributary streams can all be managed conjunctively, all without the help of a Brockway/Old Cutters study." I fully agree that the work that is being conducted by the USGS is helpful. However, the USGS is not constructing a ground water model in this area. Also, the purpose of the Brockway model is not to provide a comprehensive model for conjunctive administration in the basin. Such a model is a much larger task than the Brockway model. Instead, the Brockway model is being prepared to provide for the analysis of certain proposed water right transfers. The conjunctive administration model will be much more comprehensive and detailed, including the USGS data and much additional effort. The Brockway model is but a stepping stone toward this effort, and while small is a valuable and important contribution.

The three primary questions of your letter are addressed as follows:

1. Confirm the information in items 1 through 4 of your letter.

Yes, we rely on USGS data that have been and will be gathered, and see the USGS as partners in developing the data needed for upcoming modeling efforts. I concur with items 1 through 4 of your letter.

2. Is and will the Wood River basin remain in the number two position?

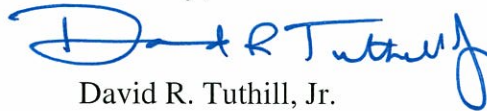
As described in the attached response to Mr. Nance, the Palouse Basin and the Wood River Basin remain in the number two position. I am not aware of any movement to alter this prioritization.

3. Will the USGS study give us the data we need to model this basin for needed conjunctive administration?

Developing a model that is sufficiently defensible to serve as the basis to regulate ground water diversions is a significant, multi-year effort. We are heading down the road to make this happen. If funding is restored for the aquifer planning process in FY2011 to enable us to move forward with this basin, I anticipate that we will develop the model as part of the aquifer planning process.

Representative Jaquet, as I indicated to Mr. Nance, the fact that you and others in this basin continue to express interest in water management of the basin is the cause of the high priority of the basin and will continue to provide impetus in the move toward conjunctive administration in the basin. The road toward fair and equitable conjunctive administration is not simple – it is long, arduous and costly. What we are contemplating is the potential to curtail very valuable ground water rights that have never heretofore been regulated. As you appreciate this is a very serious action that requires solid technical and legal basis. While we are taking steady steps in this direction it will require years of effort for full implementation. My staff and I want to continue to meet with water users, legislators, and other interested parties in this regard. Please advise if you wish to arrange a follow-up to this correspondence.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D. R. Tuthill, Jr.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

David R. Tuthill, Jr.  
Director

Attachments:

- Letter from Mr. Jerry Nance, Vice Chairman of Water Districts Nos. 37 & 37M dated October 29, 2008
- Reply to Mr. Nance dated January 11, 2009